WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

A N N U A L R E P O R T

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER of HEALTH

for the Year

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WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT of the MEDICAL OFFICER of HEALTH for the year 1920.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1920 on the health, social conditions and sanitary administration of your district.

I have great pleasure in stating that so far as the prevalence of infectious disease, the birth-rate, the ordinary and infantile death-rates, and the general health of the district are concerned, my report for this year is the most favourable one I have yet presented to you.

NATURAL and SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

1. PHYSICAL FEATURES and GENERAL CHARACTER of the DISTRICT.

The Withnell Urban District is situated between Blackburn and Chorley. It forms part of the Chorley Union and comprises the villages of Brinscall, Abbey Village, Withnell Fold and Withnell proper.

The district covers an area of 4,798 acres. It is very hilly throughout, lying at a height of from 300 to 1200 feet above sea level. A considerable portion of it is covered by moors and the reservoirs of the Liverpool Corporation.

The soil is dark loam covering a sub-soil of clay, rock and shale, the latter out-cropping at the Brinscall and Abbey Village Quarries, and the Klondyke Brick Works. There is also an outcrop of coal in the Brinscall district, the seam however is seldom more than about a foot or two in depth.

A considerable area has within recent years been planted with timber by the Liverpool Corporation, otherwise the district

is bare of trees and very exposed. The prevailing wind is from the South West. The district possesses an almost unlimited natural water supply.

2. POPULATION.

The population estimated for the year under report is 2,956. At the 1911 census it was 3,399 and in 1901, 3,349.

The number of inhabited houses is 773 and based on this estimated population the average number of persons for each house is 3.82. Ten years ago the average number of persons for each inhabited house was 5. At present there is an average of 6 acres for each house and two acres for each individual.

3. SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

The population is mainly of the industrial class. At farms, quarries and brickworks a number are employed but the great majority, which includes a large proportion of women and girls, find occupation at the cotton and paper mills in the district or the immediate vicinity. During the War, and for a part of the year under report a number were engaged in the manufacture of explosives. This Works has been removed from the district and with it what had proved to be a most unhealthy occupation. A good many of the residents find employment at a Bleach and Print Works in the adjoining township of Wheelton; the employment of married women at this particular works is not allowed.

The amount of poor law relief is trifling, and because the entire population is made up of a good type of citizen there is not much poverty, crime or immorality.

There is scarcely any occasion for gratuitous medical relief, and on the whole the cases which apply for surgical and other treatment at the Blackburn and Preston Infirmaries or the Chorley Hospital are provided with recommendations secured by subscribers or local subscriptions, and in addition

each patient makes some contribution to the Institution on leaving it.

During the year an Athletic Association has been started in the district; a suitable field has been obtained which will form a Centre for the exercise of all kinds of sports, games and athletics. A swimming club, with its Headquarters at the Council's Baths has also been formed, and it is expected that these varied facilities for open air exercise &c. will better the health and stamina of the youths and adolescents of the district.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

1. WATER SUPPLY.

The water supply is obtained from the "Goit", a natural waterway connecting up the higher and lower reservoirs of the Liverpool Corporation. From this stream (which is covered over and protected on all sides by concrete where it passes through the village) the water is pumped to an open reservoir on the top of the nearest hill "The Heights" to your water works, where it is passed through sand filters and from thence to a covered reservoir from which it is distributed to the various parts of the district. The consumption, which averages eleven gallons per head, is mainly for domestic purposes. The different works in the district possess special supplies of their own.

The water which is supplied by the Liverpool Corporation is constant throughout the year and is not restricted in any way as to amount.

Several farms are still dependent upon private springs and wells. Much has been done in the past two years in extending the Council's water to the farm houses, and the supply is easily within reach of all of them.

The quality of the water is usually excellent but

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unfortunately during the year under report there were several occasions when it was seriously contaminated by peat. The danger from this contamination was so marked that the following special report was submitted to your Council on September 2nd, and a further communication on September 22nd. As the water is gathered from high uplands and moors covered by heather, peat, turf and moss, the risk of vegetable contamination will always be great, though the afforestation of large tracts of the gathering grounds will have a very beneficial effect in years to come. Every effort is made to ensure efficient protection against pollution.

RIVERS and STREAMS.

The great majority of the streams run into the Goit and are amply protected by the Liverpool Corporation, being visited daily by the Corporation's Inspectors; the others, running north through Abbey Village, or west into the Lostock are guarded by the various works using them throughout their course.

The pollution of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal by the Withnell Fold sewage works has been remedied.

2. DRAINAGE and SEWERAGE.

The original scheme for the drainage and the sewage disposal of the district was inadequate and faulty and the policy which dictated it at the time a short-sighted one. Any scheme which has since been put forward or carried out inherits those faults, and can be of a temporary nature only until the present systems are discarded and a new scheme, big enough for the district at present and capable of easy extension to meet the needs of expansion, is brought forward.

Such a system would have its outlet in the Abbey Village district where the fall is ideal, and the intervening route for the delivery pipes easily accessible. Were this adopted the

conversion of closet accommodation from the pail to the water-borne system would be greatly encouraged and could be met without any inconvenience.

The sewage of the district is at present roughly divisible into three areas, with a separate outfall works for each. The Isolation Hospital, the farms and the outlying houses and cottages form an additional group, served by cesspools, middens or ditches, as the case may be.

Of the three areas mentioned above, that is, at Withnell Fold, Abbey Village and Brinscall, in only one, the Brinscall area, is there any attempt made to separate the sewerage from the drainage system.

(a) In the Brinscall area the fall is very slight, the surface water discharging into sluggish though natural water courses. The method of sewage disposal is by sedimentation and sprinkler beds. The sludge gravitates from the sedimentation tanks to drained beds, the effluent being pumped back for retreatment, and the final effluent discharged into a brook flowing into the neighbouring parish of Wheelton. The ventilation of this sewer is effected by manholes.

(b) For the Abbey Village area the method is precipitation by Iron Alum and treatment by Bacteria Beds, the effluent passing through filter beds and from thence into a field for irrigation. From this, the final effluent, which is always of a highly satisfactory character, ultimately discharges into a brook running through Engine Bottoms. These sewers are ventilated by manholes and vertical shafts.

(c) At Withnell Fold the sewage is treated in covered septic tanks, passed through filter beds and the final effluent, after short irrigation, discharged into the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. These sewers are ventilated by vertical shafts.

Side by side with these methods there is another system

for excrement disposal. This is effected by pail closets, ash closets and privy middens. At Brinscall and Withnell Fold the pail closet is the commonest type of closet accommodation. At Abbey Village most of the houses have water closets.

CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.

The conversion from pails and privies to the water-borne system moves very slowly in your district, although a few water closets are installed every year. I am instructed that the attention of the Ministry of Health is very specially directed to this matter at present, and I consider that it is one which should receive your very careful attention. I think your Council should give every encouragement to property owners to install this system of sewage and take advantage of existing legislation which enables you to give financial assistance to owners to carry out the change. So far you have not contributed towards the conversion of one system to another.

It is not necessary for me to repeat the advantages of the water-borne system over the conservancy system of sewage disposal. Privies, middens and pail closets are unsightly, unhealthy and expensive and take up more space than any other system. At the end of the year 1920 the closet accommodation for your district was as follows:-

No. of Privy Middens ..... 16.

No. of Closets attached to these middens ... 37.

No. of Pail Closets ..... 527.

No. of Fresh Water Closets .... 156.

No. of Waste Water Closets .... 50.

which gives a total of 770 closets for 773 houses.

I regret to report that, except for the conversion of 6 privy closets to pails, which, although a step in the right direction, is still unsatisfactory, nothing whatever has been

done during the year to diminish the number of unsightly and unhealthy privies and middens. Two pail closets have been converted to fresh water closets.

I think your Council should aim at the conversion of at least 10 to 20 each year, and where changes are made, it should go the whole way to a fresh water closet. It would seem a waste of material to stop at the pail closet system.

I had hoped to see it made a rule that all new property should have the water-borne system and this rule strictly adhered to.

3. SCAVENGING.

The character and efficiency of the arrangements under the supervision of your Surveyor for the removal and disposal of house refuse, and the cleansing of earth closets, privies, ash pits and cesspools, is on the whole highly successful.

The carrying out of the system of the kind obtaining in your district presents many difficulties. There is always the danger from faulty pails, and the spilling of the contents, and as these receptacles are not kept in duplicate, the tubs or pails themselves become dirty and offensive.

The removal of excrement from middens is also a source of danger, and as the privy middens in your district are of the crudest type, and nearly always inaccessible to carts, the contents have to be conveyed some distance, the process is offensive, and the risk of pollution great.

House refuse is carted to an Isolation Tip, the property of the Council; the contents of the privy middens and pails, the latter of which are emptied by night, are disposed of to the farmers.

There are 360 dry ashpits and 212 portable receptacles for refuse. This leaves a big discrepancy between the number of receptacles for house refuse and the number of houses, which is explained by adjoining houses using the same

receptacle. For the year under report the number of movable ashbins, with proper coverings, is 212, for the previous year 1919 it was 210 - this addition was in the case of new property.

During the year there were no conversions from dry ash pits to portable receptacles. The correct receptacle, with a well-fitting lid, is such an improvement on the dry ash pit, and the saving of labour and the unsightly mess when an ashpit is emptied, should commend the ash bin to all property owners, and especially to your Council.

SANITARY INSPECTION of DISTRICT.

I have at some time visited every house in your district, and during the present year carefully inspected the sanitary accommodation of over 300 dwelling houses. Your Nuisance Inspector, under this head, specially visited a large number of houses, and I beg to refer you to his Annual Report for the details of this inspection.

His Report includes 22 houses specially noted by him, and in every case where any faults were found and brought to the notice of the responsible owner, these defects were remedied within a short time.

These defects were mainly "dampness in the walls caused by faults in the roof or down pipes, and in the old houses by the absence of a dampcourse; in other cases they were faulty floors, windows or drains, unflagged yards and damaged closet doors." As an example of the work done in these cases I give you an instance of a house in a very bad state of repairs.

It was not necessary to take legal proceedings in any case as all nuisances were abated by informal notice.

There are no premises or occupations, such as underground sleeping rooms or offensive trades, which need special mention.

Another sanitary circumstance requiring notice was the

inspection of poultry kept in the yards of dwelling houses, and several special reports were submitted to you, copies of which are attached. I have not been informed as to what action your Council took as a result of these.

SCHOOLS.

The sanitary condition of the schools has required attention during the year and I enclose herewith a copy of my Special Report on the closet accommodation of Withnell St. Paul's C.E. School.

During the year it was necessary to close the following schools for the following periods:-

St.Joseph's R.C.School ..... from August 9th to August 16th.
" " " " ..... " August 16th to August 23rd.

Abbey Village Board School .. from September 10th to October 1st.

MILK SUPPLY.

The milk supplied to the district during the year was wholesome in quality and adequate in amount. There are in your district 26 cowkeepers, all on the register, who sell milk, and 6 milk purveyors, other than cowkeepers, also registered.

The presence of Tuberculosis has not been detected amongst any of the cattle.

There is no arrangement for the veterinary inspection of cows, nor has any scheme been prepared in regard to the supply of milk for expectant mothers or infants.

The Regulations made under the Local Government Board with regard to dairies and cowsheds, the Milk and Cream Regulations and the Milk Order of 1919 have not been enforced as they ought to have been, or have not been adopted.

The cowsheds on the various farms are, as a rule, good stone buildings, but in some of them the lighting is bad and the ventilation worse, while only a very few have proper dairies attached. The air space allowed for each animal is, as a

rule, sufficient. The water supply to practically all the farms is now good.

MEAT.

All meat used for consumption during the year was killed outside the district and presumably inspected before it came into the possession of the meat purveyors.

The slaughter house, which was in use in 1914, has not been used since 1917, and I would again urge upon you the necessity to prepare some scheme for the erection of a good Public Abattoir. When animals are again slaughtered in your district I think the present building should be used for some other purpose, and not in future as a slaughter house.

BAKEHOUSES.

There are 6 bakehouses in the district, all in a satisfactory condition.

FRIED FISH SHOPS.

There are five fried fish shops, all of which possess efficient frying apparatus. They are kept scrupulously clean and t he premises are made as attractive as can be expected under the circumstances.

There was no outbreak of food poisoning reported during the year.

4. INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

PREVALENCE.

Your district has been remarkably free from Infectious Disease during the year under report. My Annual Health Report in this connection, a copy of which was forwarded to the County Medical Officer of Health, states that there was one case of Diphtheria notified, one of Scarlet Fever, one of Ophthalmia Neonatorum, four of Tuberculosis, three of which were pulmonary, making a total of seven notifications altogether.

There was not, in any of these cases, any evidence whatever of the spread of the infection, and except in the case of Tubercular Disease, there was no second case of the same form of infection. The tubercular cases occurred in separate districts and there was no likelihood of contact at work or in their homes.

There is always in hand a supply of Anti-Toxin, which is promptly used in suitable cases.

I am glad to state that, although both eyes were affected in the case of Ophthalmia Neonatorum, there was no permanent injury to the child's eyesight.

The cases of Malaria notified prior to 1920 have either recovered entirely or are rapidly recovering, so that I hope in my next report to be able to state that this disease has died out, as dysentery has done.

The return on the progress of cases of Poliomyelitis notified prior to 1920 is satisfactory.

It was impossible to trace the source of the infection in any of the cases notified and it was very satisfactory to note that there was no spread of this infection.

It was not necessary to resort to bacteriological investigation to aid in the diagnosis of any of the above cases. It was done, however, to confirm the diagnosis in the cases of Tubercular Disease, and the work was carried out by the Ministry of Health by the machinery of the Insurance Commissioners. The isolation of the cases was satisfactory, and disinfection was in every case carried out.

As the district was not threatened with small-pox during the year there were no vaccinations or re-vaccinations performed by the Medical Officer of Health.

The only form of non-notifiable infectious disease present during the year was Measles, and the number of cases ascertained was away below that of other years.

When infection attacks the children attending any school in the district the Head Teacher communicates the fact to me immediately, and the remedies suggested to limit the outbreak are promptly and loyally carried out.

There was no fatal case of Influenza during the year, the disease was not very prevalent and all the cases were mild.

There are no special facilities available in the district for the cleansing of verminous persons and their belongings. Fortunately such cases are practically non-existent.

There has never been any difficulty in securing prompt notification of Tuberculosis by medical practitioners in your district, and all the requirements of the Tuberculosis Regulations and Orders are strictly observed by them.

5. MATERNITY and CHILD WELFARE.

I think it is regrettable that your Council, as the responsible authority for the health of the district, has never officially identified itself with this branch of preventative medicine, even though the work in this connection could not have been done any better by you than it is already being done by voluntary effort.

At the Babies' Welcome, started in your district by private enterprise in 1912 and therefore with over eight years experience of this class of work, the general arrangements made for attending to the health of expectant and nursing mothers, and children under five years of age, are excellent.

The expectant mothers report themselves to the staff of the Nursing Association or an approved voluntary worker. They are visited regularly in their homes, printed instructions and other leaflets of an educative nature are given them, and they are taught what preparations to make for the arrival of the child. They are guided in all matters relating to their own health and instructed and advised in the upbringing of infants.

Where expectant mothers fail to report themselves, a list of the notified births is obtained by the voluntary helpers and all such cases are promptly visited as soon as possible after the birth of the child.

For the work of the Babies' Welcome itself, premises have been obtained and equipped for consultation, and meetings for examination and inspection.

Here all young mothers are welcomed and tea is provided. The mothers receive instruction, advice and help from qualified persons in the feeding, care and clothing of their infants, and taught how to treat the simpler ailments of their babies.

Infant consultations are held once a fortnight, the children are inspected and weighed and all records kept.

Addresses are given from time to time and an annual Baby Competition held. This event is more or less competitive and the prize-winners receive Certificates of Merit. The entries for this are very encouraging, and it is noticeable the steady improvement in the general health, condition and evidence of care of the babies from year to year.

The question of a Maternity Home for the reception of expectant and nursing mothers and young children as in-patients, has been seriously discussed, but because the ante-natal and other work in connection with the Midwifery service already supplied by the Babies' Welcome has prevented its absence being felt, the urgent necessity for one in your district has not yet been proved.

The Babies' Welcome also covers all dealings with unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, and with children temporarily or permanently deprived of a home with their own parents. In your district, however, cases like these seldom occur.

There has not been, so far, any co-ordination between the work of the Babies' Welcome and the School Medical Service.

Temporary arrangements for the supply of food and milk have been made for necessitous cases, and this work is carried out by your Surveyor on behalf of the Local Relief Committee.

I should like to point out here that I can find no scheme under the Board of Education or the Ministry of Health, or any other Government Authority, which provides for the after treatment of Poliomyelitis.

6. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

(1) STAFF.

I should like again respectfully to point out to you that this Department is understaffed, and that the work of visiting, inspecting and reporting on the condition of all kinds of property in your area cannot therefore be adequately carried out.

Owing to the varied activities of your Sanitary Inspector it is impossible for him to give sufficient time to the enormous amount of work thrown upon him by the Housing and Town Planning Act, while the work of Inspection of Dairies and Cowsheds is liable to be overlooked.

I must say that the supervision over the occurrence and abatement of nuisances has been very efficient.

(2) HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

There is an Infectious Diseases Hospital, of which the Medical Officer of Health is the Medical Superintendent.

Although of modern construction this building is not satisfactory. It is composed of two wards with an Administrative block. The Administrative block is good, but for the accommodation of the nursing staff it is too far from the Wards. It is at present occupied by the caretaker and his wife.

There is no provision in the Hospital for the treatment of more than one kind of Infectious Disease at a time, and it is very difficult to make satisfactory arrangements for the

separation of the sexes in adult patients. There is no provision whatever for a day room and very poor sleeping accommodation for a professional nurse.

As the Hospital now stands, over half of the whole building would have to be heated and lighted for the accommodation of a single case. Had the Hospital been built with sma small wards it would then have been possible to treat different kinds of Infectious Disease, and at the same time accommodate the different sexes.

I am very glad to state that this makes the sixth consecutive year that the Hospital has been closed. I must again draw your attention to the fact that there is no apparatus for the disinfection of clothing, bedding &c.

The site of the Hospital is in an excellent situation, one acre in extent. The heating is by central stoves and hot water pipes; it is lighted by gas, and ventilation is well provided for. The provision for laundry work might be improved.

The drainage is adequate, the sewage is conveyed in pipes to a septic tank and small filter bed in the grounds. The effluent is discharged into a ditch.

There is no mortuary or discharge block. A vehicle is kept for the conveyance of infectious cases.

For Small-pox cases a retaining fee is paid to the Blackburn Rural District Council for one bed at the Hospital at Finnington. It has not been necessary, however, to use this bed since 1904.

(3) LOCAL ACTS.

The following Acts and Bye-Laws are in force:-

1. The Infectious Diseases Prevention Act, 1890.
2. The Public Health Amendment Act, 1890.
3. The Public Health Act Amendment Act, 1907.

(4) CHEMICAL and BACTERIOLOGICAL WORK.

It has not been necessary to obtain the services of the public analyst during the year. Chemical and Bacteriological work is, as a rule, carried out for your Council at the Public Health Laboratories, York Place, Manchester, under the supervision of Professor Delepine.

The work for the detection of Tubercle Bacilli has so far been done under the National Health Insurance.

7. OTHER SERVICES.

There is no existing co-operation between your Council and the voluntary Hospitals or the Poor Law or any other agencies.

HOUSING.

I. GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS.

(1) GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS.

The inhabitants of the district over which you have control are largely accommodated by, in the majority of cases, good stone houses. Some, though not all, of the more recent dwellings are built of brick. All the house property is very well built and kept in a particularly clean condition. The rents vary from the smaller cottages in outlying districts from 3/6 to 10/6 for the better class of house.

In the great majority of cases the house consists of two rooms and a scullery downstairs, with three bedrooms upstairs.

The streets are wide, well laid out, and kept particularly clean.

There are no back-to-back houses, no congested areas, only two or three instances where houses have no back doors or are without separate sanitary accommodation.

Practically all the houses are supplied, and are certainly within easy reach of both the Council's gas and water supply. There is, in the main, sufficient air space allotted to each

house. The roofs, except in some of the very older houses where stone tiles are used, are covered with slates, and at present there are no houses in an insanitary condition.

(2) (a) EXTENT of SHORTAGE.

Owing to the reduction of population, due to some extent to the War, by the loss of men and the removal of their families, the housing conditions have become markedly easier, so that although at present there is no excess of houses there is not any shortage.

(b) Unfortunately a few of the existing inhabited houses are still unsatisfactory, but there are not enough suitable houses for these to be thrown empty. The rental as a rule in these cases is low enough to be sufficient inducement to secure satisfactory tenants for them. There is still considerable competition for the average class of dwelling.

Owing to the fact that there was practically no demand for houses of the type and price which it was intended to build under the Housing Act, the scheme for the erection of new property, by the Council, was dropped and at present there are no measures contempleated to meet any shortage if one should arise in the immediate future.

(3)

There is at present no likelihood that owing to the establishment of a new industry in the district, or the opening up of existing works, now idle, there will be any increase in the population for some years to come other than the natural increase brought about by the excess of births over deaths, in the absence of migration.

Building operations are not allowed on the large tract of land under the Liverpool Corporation.

II. OVERCROWDING.

(1) EXTENT.

As indicated above it can hardly be said that there is

any overcrowding in the district at present, the average number of persons for each inhabited house being 3.82 as against 5 in 1913.

(2) CAUSES.

The reason for this is because of the depletion of the population in recent years, with perhaps an increase in the number of suitable dwellings.

(3) MEASURES TAKEN or CONTEMPLATED with OVERCROWDING.

In this way the overcrowding, which was distinctly in evidence during the years 1911 to 1914, righted itself.

(4) PRINCIPAL CASES of OVERCROWDING.

It was not necessary to take any action for overcrowding during the year.

III. FITNESS of HOUSES.

(1) (a) GENERAL STANDARD.

The general standard of housing in your district is good, and, compared with other districts in the neighbourhood, house property is distinctly above the average.

(b) GENERAL CHARACTER of DEFECTS.

Apart from the fact that a few of the houses are unsatisfactory in the matter of accommodation, largely due to situation, the general character of the defects found to exist are as stated in your Surveyor's Report, namely "dampness in walls, mostly from faulty roofs, downpipes and want of damp-courses in the old houses, faulty floors and windows, damaged closet doors and roofs, faulty drains."

Other defects were fixed windows impeding ventilation and the too close proximity of privy middens, tub closets and open ash pits.

As all these faults, however, were remedied after informal notice, there is no house property in the district which could

be regarded as totally unfit for human habitation.

(c) CAUSES of DEFECTS.

The existence of such defects was due to lack of proper suprevision by the owners in some cases, but in the majority of cases due to the difficulty in securing labour to carry out repairs.

(2) GENERAL ACTION ACTION taken as regards UNFIT HOUSES under:-

(a) THE PUBLIC HEALTH ACTS.

In every case where any defects were found, on the matter being brought to the notice of the person responsible, the defects were made good within a short time, and no further action was necessary.

(b) THE HOUSING ACT.

Nil.

(3)

In the case of some of the house property the difficulties of unfitness were overcome by throwing two houses into one; others were enlarged by additions on the same site.

(4)

Except in the case of some of the farms and outlying cottages all the houses are supplied by water from your Council's pipes. As I have said before, the closet accommodation and the ash pits at some of the house property are very unsatisfactory, and that the conversion from privy middens and pails to the water-borne system of sewage, and from ash pits to ash bins, is disappointingly slow.

IV. UNHEALTHY AREAS.

There were no complaints received during the year or representations made, under Part I or Part II of the Housing Act of 1890.

V. BYELAWS relating to HOUSES &c.

In your district there are no common lodging houses and no inhabited tents, vans or sheds.

VI. GENERAL and MISCELLANEOUS.

No other action bearing on the Public Health has been taken during the year by your Council in connection with overcrowding insanitary property and housing, whether under the Housing Acts or the Public Health Acts.

APPENDICES.

HOUSING CONDITIONS STATISTICS.

Year ended 31st December 1920.

1. GENERAL.

(1) Estimated population 2956

(2) General death-rate 11.8

(3) Death-rate from Tuberculosis 0.33

(4) Infantile Mortality 25.0

(5) Number of dwelling houses of all classes 773

(6) Number of working-class dwelling houses 718

(7) Number of new working-class houses erected ... 3

2. UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.

I. INSPECTION.

(1) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) 140

(2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910 22

(3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ..... Nil

(4) Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation 22

II. REMEDY of DEFECTS without SERVICE of FORMAL NOTICES.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers 18

III. ACTION under STATUTORY POWERS.

A. Proceedings under section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act, 1919.

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ..... Nil

(2) Number of dwelling houses rendered fit
(a) by owners ..... Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners ..... Nil

(3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close ..... Nil

B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied ..... Nil

(2) Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied
(a) by owners ..... Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of owners ..... Nil

C. Proceedings under sections 17 and 18 of the Housing and Town Planning &c. Act, 1909.

(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders ..... Nil

(2) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ..... Nil

(3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the dwelling houses having been rendered fit ..... Nil

(4) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ..... Nil

(5) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders ..... Nil

3. UNHEALTHY AREAS.

Areas represented to the Local Authority with a view to Improvement Schemes under (a)Part I or (b)Part II of the Act of 1890:-

(1) Name of Area ..... Nil

(2) Acreage ..... Nil

(3) Number of working-class houses in area ..... Nil

(4) Number of working-class persons to be displaced ..... Nil

4. Number of houses not complying with the building byelaws erected with consent of Local Authority under Section 25 of the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act 1919 ..... Nil

5. Staff engaged on housing work with, briefly, the duties of each Officer.

The Surveyor, who combines the offices of Housing and Sanitary Inspector.

VITAL STATISTICS.

All the important Vital Statistics for the year under report are highly satisfactory, and will, as seen below, compare very favourably with the decennial period (1910-1919) preceding it.

1. BIRTHS.

In keeping with the statistics for other parts of the country, the birth-rate in your district, which had been steadily falling for several years, shews for this year a marked rise.

There were 77 children born, 38 males and 39 females. Two of these, one girl and one boy, were illegitimate. This gives a birth-rate of 26.05, compared with a birth-rate of 14.1 for the year 1919, and with 17.6 for the decade preceding, 1910-1919. The rate for England and Wales for the same period is 25.4.

This is a very satisfactory feature of my report.

2. DEATHS.

During the year 35 deaths were registered, 19 males and 16 females, giving a rate of 11.84. The mean for the previous ten years is 12.1 while the rate for England and Wales is 12.4. This is also very satisfactory.

I regret that this year there is an epidemic death-rate of 0.33, whereas for the year 1919 it was nil, and for the decade 1910-1919, 0.54, while for England and Wales the figure is 0.78.

The phthisis death-rate for the year was 0.33. For the year 1919 this rate was 0.70 and for the ten years preceding 0.60 - for England and Wales this rate is 1.00.

I am glad to point out a steady improvement in this rate.

The commonest causes of death were Heart Failure with

six cases, Bronchitis four, Pneumonia two and Cancer two.

It is very gratifying to note a falling off in the number of deaths from Malignant Disease (Cancer &c.). In 1919 there were four deaths from Cancer, while in the years 1910-1919 there was an average of 3.2 each year.

10 residents were above the age of 70 at death. The average adult age at death was 65.69 compared with 61.4 in 1919.

3. INFANTILE MORTALITY.

This is the number of deaths in children under one year, per thousand births. For the year under report this rate was 25.97, whereas for the year 1919 it was 23, while the average for the previous ten years is 66. There were no deaths among illegitimate children.

Taking these important rates the birth-rate shews a rise of 11.95 on the previous year and a rise of 8.9 on the ten years average; the death-rate shews a fall of 1.2 on the previous year and 0.3 on the ten years average; the epidemic death-rate gives a rise of 0.33 on the previous year when it was nil, and a fall of 0.21 on the ten years average.

The phthisis death-rate shews a fall of 0.37 on the previous year and 0.27 on the ten years average.

The infantile death-rate shews a rise of 2.90 on the previous year and a fall of 41.00 on the ten years average.

ROADS.

In keeping with the roads throughout the country those in your district, and especially the main roads, are in very bad condition.

During the War and since peace was declared, very little has been done to repair the damage done by the great increase of traffic on the main roads, and if the char-a-banc and motor traffic is continued in its present volume the state of your

roads and the safety of them will need your urgent attention.

I am convinced that, in the interests of the health of the residents in the Abbey Village district, your Council should insist on the County Authorities keeping the main Bolton-Preston road in reasonable repair where it passes through your district, and that it should be dressed with tar through the whole length of the village. The noise of the traffic is a serious factor indeed in cases of grave illness in any house in this village.

It would be in the interests of the health of the householders in Withnell and Brinscall if a similar dressing were applied to School Lane, Railway Road and Bury Lane.

I should like again to respectfully advert to my suggestion for substituting a light railing for the high wall along Railway Road. Now that the trees planted by the Liverpool Corporation along the sides of the Goit have topped the wall the suggested change should be a very great improvement.

FACTORIES and WORKSHOPS.

Some of these have needed attention during the year, and the closets connected with the Withnell Mill cotton factory have been improved and new ones erected.

It has been necessary during the year to communicate with the Star Paper Mill Company and draw their attention to one of their chimneys which almost continuously emitted black smoke. The correspondence is in the hands of your Surveyor, and I should like to draw your attention to the matter.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

See page 4.

REPORT on the PRESENCE of PEAT in the PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES in the WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT.

(Presented to the Health Committee, September 2nd, 1920.)

Brinscall.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Health Committee, Withnell Urban District.

Gentlemen,

I beg to draw your attention to the unsatisfactory condition of the water supplied to you by the Liverpool Corporation and used for drinking purposes in your district. I have had occasion twice before to make a similar Report.

Since early in the first quarter of this year and for short periods during 1919, the tap water has been loaded with vegetable matter, mainly peat. The discoloration from this is great enough to hide the bottom of a white container, two feet deep.

There are five objections to peat in water for human consumption, stated below.

The first one is usually given, though I myself do not believe that it is founded upon facts, while about the others there is no question.

(1) Possible cause of Derbyshire neck, goitre and Graves Disease.

(2) The appearance of the water is objectionable and one instinctively turns to a clear water for drinking purposes.

(3) Peaty water is an almost certain cause of diarrhoea.

(4) Peaty acids in the water bring about the absorption

of lead from lead pipes and might at any time cause an outbreak of lead poisoning.

(5) A soft peaty water, acid in reaction, will very much shorten the life of lead pipes.

The first objection to my mind does not apply. With regard to heading No. 5, the water supplied by you is only faintly acid, and although it does not possess the same degree of hardness as in previous years it could not even now be classed as a soft water.

Up till the present I have had no cases under Headings 1, 3 and 4 traceable to the water supply, even where, owing to the nature of their complaint, some inhabitants are large users of drinking water.

It is quite possible that the astringent action of the lead, if present, might counteract the tendency towards diarrhoea usually caused if large quantities of vegetable matter be present in the drinking water.

I would make the following recommendations:-

(1) Some samples of the water should be submitted for bacteriological and chemical analysis. These should be collected under my supervision and delivered by hand at the Laboratory by your Surveyor.

(2) Such steps should be taken as to insure the entire removal of all vegetable matter from the water supplied to the district.

The remedies are:-

(1) By turning into the contaminated water a sufficient percentage of spring water to neutralize the vegetable matter present in it.

(2) The addition of 4 cwt. of Carbonate of Soda for every million gallons of water supplied.

(3) The removal of the vegetable matter by filtration &c.

I shall report more fully as soon as I receive a bacteriological report and a report on the chemical analysis.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

See page 4.

September 22nd, 1920.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Health Committee, Withnell Urban District.

Gentlemen,

I enclose for your consideration, report on the chemical analysis of two samples of water taken to the Manchester Public Health Laboratory by your Surveyor, Mr. A. Penney, on September 13th, 1920.

In commenting on these reports I have to state that neither of the above analyses furnishes evidence of harmful contamination. It is very desirable, however, that the physical characters of the water should be improved, either before it leaves the Liverpool Corporation's grounds, or afterwards by your Surveyor.

I would suggest that until these are corrected, periodical analyses of the water should be made in order that the degree of, and any change in, its lead solvent activity may be ascertained. It might be desirable to treat the water with a suitable lead protective agent, such as Carbonate of Soda. Until these recommendations are carried out there will always be present the possibility and dread of lead poisoning.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

See page 8.

Council Chambers,

B R I N S C A L L ,

Near CHORLEY.

19/3/20.

Dear Sir,

I visited and inspected the house, 131 School Lane, as instructed, and beg to report as follows:-

The house is a four-roomed house, two rooms down and two up. The front room or living place had large patches of the ceiling fallen off, exposing the old ceiling plaster laths. As this was right in the centre of the room and over the table, it caused a bad draught on the heads of the occupants.

Part of the floor is below the level of the ground outside and water runs over it in damp weather.

The back room or scullery floor is also damp, and no coal store being provided, coal is tipped on the open floor, partly under the slope of the stairs. The back window has no ventilation. Flags also require repairs.

Upstairs the back bedroom requires boarding off from the stairs. The back ceiling is bulging down from off the roof spars, at one side, and the back wall is very damp. In the front bedroom the ceiling has fallen in places, causing very bad draughts to blow all over the place.

The front window opens, but the back one has had to be fastened up. The upper part of the roof has given way, and is falling in owing to rotting spars, and on examining up over the ceiling we found practically all the slate pointing had fallen off, causing the draughts and allowing rain or snow to

blow all over. At present the house is not fit for human habitation, owing to the bad state of the roof, walls and ceilings.

The tenants have no comfort, and no encouragement to keep the house clean. I shall be pleased to receive your further instructions.

Yours faithfully,

A. PENNEY,

Sanitary Inspector.

See page 9.

December 2nd, 1920.

The Health Committee.

REPORT on POULTRY in BACKYARDS

in

WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT.

Gentlemen,

I beg to make the following report on the conditions in which hens are kept in the following backyards in your district.

Bolton Road.119 ..... 1 cabin. 14 hens running loose.

" " 125 ..... 3 pens.. 14 hens and rabbit. All confined.

South View,1 & 2 ..... 1 pen in each.

Victoria Terrace 16 .. 6 hens, only to roost.

" " 8 & 20 . 2 flocks.

East View 2 ..... 2 bantams.

" " 6 ..... 2 hens.

Livesey Fold 15 ..... 12 pigeons.

" " 17 ..... 8 hens.

" " 21 ..... 2 hens.

School Lane 7 ..... 1 cabin with 11 hens running loose. This cabin is too close to the window of the dwelling house.

" " 10 ..... 9 hens running loose.

North East Avenue 2 .. 7 hens in coal place, running loose.

In every case the pens have been improvised, are very rough and unsightly. Both for the sake of the hend and the

householders it would be better, of course, if all fowl stock were kept on allotments at some distance from dwellings.

During the War, householders were urged to use every available space for producing food, otherwise I think a good many people who keep hens without proper accommodation for them, would never have done so.

Except at 119, 125 Bolton Road, and 16 Victoria Terrace, Abbey Village, and 17 Livesey Fold, Withnell, where there is evidence of some overcrowding, there is not much to complain of. In the latter case the yard was in a very dirty condition.

At No. 7 School Lane the conditions were also unsuitable for hen-keeping. No. 10 School Lane should, perhaps, not be included under the above heading because the hens are seldom, if ever, in the backyard. The yard itself is in a very bad state of repair, and I think that the property owner's attention should be drawn to it.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

See page 9. December 9th, 1920.

The Health Committee,

Gentlemen,

1. I have again inspected the pigeon cote at No. 11 School Lane, Brinscall, and have to report that, as far as the cote itself is concerned, it is an excellent one for the purpose, and kept scrupulously clean.

It is, however, too large for the back yard, and somewhat affects the lighting, both in the yard to which it belongs, and in the yard next door. The householder states that it has been built by him to take the place of a much larger one.

The original cote covered twice as much floor space and blocked out all the light from a window, which this one leaves three-quarters free; it also covered the outlet and drain from the slop stone.

The present cote is about four feet off the ground at all points. The plans for the original cote were passed by your predecessors on the Council.

2. I have again inspected the sanitary conveniences at St. Paul's School and found them in a deplorable condition. The intermittent flushing of the water closets for the girls' school is totally inadequate.

The closet accommodation for the boys' school is structurally bad, in very bad repair and, in addition, has been neglected by your scavengers.

The Managers of the school have undertaken to carry out my recommendations and are obtaining estimates for new water closets all in one and all on the water-borne system.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

INSPECTION of UNFIT HOUSES and UNHEALTHY AREAS.

The Withnell Urban District Council.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have been asked by the Housing Commissioner to make a Report to you under the above heading.

I have inspected all the house property in your district likely to be affected by the above Regulation and I have to report that, according to the standard of fitness given on Pages 10, 11 and 12 in the Manual, by the Ministry of Health, of Unfit Houses and Unhealthy areas, there is no house property in your district which should be condemned as unfit for human habitation.

Under the heading of sanitary conveniences and drainage, I have to report that the closets supplying the houses in Bury Lane, Nos. 23, 25, 27, 29 and 31 are in such a state as to be a danger to health, and that No. 121 School Lane is without separate closet accommodation.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The closet accommodation should be converted either to the pail system or to the water-borne system.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

The Withnell Urban District Council.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I beg to make the following Report:-

Since my last Report, at the request of your Surveyor, I have inspected the back yards and closet accommodation of Nos. 3 and 5 Livesey Fold, Withnell and found that:-

In No. 3 the floor of the closet, instead of being at a higher level than the approach to it, is some nine inches below the surrounding surface and the roof and walls are faulty, and I understand from the householder that up to a few days ago there was no pail, although the closet is on the pail system.

The same criticism applies to the closet at No. 5 and in this case there is no pail also.

It is quite evident that the emptying of this closet has been overlooked by your scavengers.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.